EDITORIAL

VICTORIA IVLEVA AND AMANDA MURPHY

Durham University Colby College

Welcome to the special issue of *Clothing Cultures*, which focuses on Imperial Russian dress culture from the reign of Peter the Great (1682-1725) to the October Revolution of 1917. It is our intention to explore dress as a cultural and social phenomenon within the imperial historical framework, and show how the production and circulation of material artefacts in cultural and artistic texts resulted in the construction of meaning. Authors in this issue demonstrate how dress was received in a variety of cultural contexts, in which it manifested aesthetic, ideological and social ideas. They employ methodological frameworks taken from the fields of structuralism and semiotics, as well as theories of reception and performance. The issue is organized in a historical progression from the eighteenth to the very beginning of the twentieth century.

Petrine reforms, including the clothing revolution, which he introduced between 1700 and 1724, mark an important watershed in the history and culture of Russia, a period of intensive borrowing and learning from the West. To a certain extent, these processes were already activated in the seventeenth century, during the reign of Peter's father, tsar Alexis (1645-1676), but Peter the Great brought them to the forefront of the Russian life. One of his reforms was the introduction of Western-style clothing for the urban population in Russia from the beginning of 1700. Western-style dress for men, which was deemed more suitable for both work and movement, included a *justacorps* or caftan, as this garment was called in Russia, a waistcoat, and knee-length breeches.

Female dress also underwent important changes: it became more revealing and flattering to the figure, featuring a low neck, a corset and a full skirt. Peasants and clergy were allowed to continue wearing traditional dress, which included long coats/caftans, *tulups* (sheep-skin coats), *sarafans* (sleeveless pinafore dresses), *dushegreikas* (sleeveless padded jackets) and other garments. This 'clothing revolution' marked a visible and distinctive break between old and new cultures. Together with other state and administrative reforms, it activated a number of cultural dichotomies that became crucial for ideological and aesthetic debates: ethnic vs. Western, religious vs. secular, traditional vs. progressive, urban vs. rural, state vs. individual, public vs. private, official vs. unofficial, upper classes vs. serfs, authentic vs. artificial, conformity vs. resistance, fashion vs. anti-fashion. To varying extents, all the articles in the issue engage with and seek to further problematise these oppositions.

Dress acquired heightened semiotic and symbolic meaning in Russian culture and was politicized in the eighteenth-century (Proskurin 1999: 303-304) to such an extent that when the tsar Paul I acceded to the throne in 1796, he banned all European garments, which he associated with the French Revolution. This prohibition lasted only until Paul's death in 1801, but the discontent with similar cultural and linguistic borrowings was later mocked by the great Russian writer Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837) in his novel-in-verse *Eugene Onegin*, 'But *pantaloons*, *gilet*, and *frock* –/ These words are hardly Russian stock' (trans. by James E. Falen 1998: 16). If one examines late eighteenth-century cultural discourse or early nineteenth-century literary criticism, s/he will notice the abundance of dress tropes employed to discuss the aesthetic and ideological goals of literature, its genres and features, and the identities of subjects of the Russian empire.

This was the period when authentic Russian literature started to burgeon, and when Russian criticism was growing out of its swaddling clothes.

The aim of this issue is not only to trace common sartorial threads in Russian culture, but also to show the capacity for humans and objects to interact and create a richly embroidered fabric of interweaving histories. The first article of the issue, written by Victoria Ivleva, explores the cultural biography of the caftan, a garment that acquired a Western shape, function, and identity in urban Russia in the course of the eighteenth century and became a visual and material symbol of modernising reforms. Looking at its representations in folklore, legal documents, and literature, she shows how the garment became associated with officially imposed and internalized values, class vicissitudes, and the social practices of upper classes. As a 'thought-woven' garment, the caftan contributed to the discourse on the impact of the reforms, Russian identity, and social and cultural policies. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the caftan, as a part of the uniform, became associated with the state's impositions on the identities of its subjects, and, therefore, was succeeded in literary works by the dressing gown, a symbol of internal freedom and creativity.

The second article, written by Svetlana Amelekhina and Daniel Green, takes a close look at the 'Russian dress' introduced by Catherine II in the 1770s as a ceremonial court garment and its modifications throughout the imperial period of Russian history. The scholars utilize Richard Wortman's *Scenarios of Power* as a theoretical framework to demonstrate the symbolic value of 'Russian dress' in the context of imperial ceremonies and the legitimization of power. They examine Catherine's reform as a part of the emerging interest in national forms of dress at European courts. They argue that the

traditional Russian features of this court dress manifested a symbolic link between the sovereigns and their subjects, while its Western features established a link with European royal courts. The dress's heterogeneity, however, also created a sense of ambiguity, which both connected the upper classes with and separated them from the people. The scholars demonstrate that throughout the imperial period, female court dress became an accurate barometer of the social changes and prevailing moods in society, and show how questions of nationhood were negotiated through imperial court garments.

The emerging interest in national forms was a part of the new Romantic literature that blossomed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Romanticism, which sought to examine history through the prism of a distinct national spirit, under the influence of Johan Gottfried von Herder looked for cultural roots in folklore and the *Volk*. In *The Captain's Daughter* (1836), a novel that emerged out of this tradition, Alexander Pushkin, the writer, poet and the state historiographer at Nicolas I's court offered a poetic interpretation of Pugachev's uprising (1773-1775), a violent rebellion of Cossacks and peasants that took place during Catherine the Great's reign (1762-1796), an imposture event that generated the mechanisms of masquerade, with its associative meanings of disguise and dress ambivalences. Here, sartorial semiotic codes became an important part of the dialogue between official and traditional culture.

As Amanda Murphy argues, in this work, Pushkin offers an exploration of the concept of moral economy in the context of eighteenth-century Russian history, looking for potential ways to reconcile opposing forces, which themselves struggle to resolve their own personal and official affinities. Dress becomes an important semiotic language in the novel. While official and military garments separate characters, traditional dress

brings opposing parties together by conveying timeless values. Connected with domestic, private space and pre-Petrine dress practices when clothes worn by all social estates were universal in form, the latter provides a sense of authenticity and belonging, and helps highlight the virtues of the characters. Traditional garments such as the hare-skin *tulup*, *dushegreika*, and *sarafan* help to bridge the social and emotional distance and create lasting emotional connections between protagonists, with the first two garments linking the two young protagonists Petrusha and Masha with their symbolic godparents—Pugachev and Catherine II, who can be perceived as the two imposters on the Russian throne with very different fates. Poeticized history and the writer's personal biography interlace in this narrative, creating an exuberant literary fabric.

Along with the trend for historical novels, which gained popularity in Europe and Russia in the 1830s, Walter Scott's novels brought Scottish tartans into fashion. Raisa Kirsanova employs two famous portraits of Alexander Pushkin (1827) by Orest Kiprensky and by Vasily Tropinin as points of departure for her contemplation on the *zeitgeist* during Nicholas I's reign. Having been heralded into office by the Decembrist uprising (1825), Nicholas I introduced reactionary policies in order to suppress all forms of revolt and manifestations of free spirit, which included hanging the five leaders of the uprising, who were representatives of the noble elite, and exiling many others to Siberia. In this context, such garments as Scottish tartans and dressing gowns became semiotically charged, reflecting both aesthetic and political ideas. Tartans had implications of spiritual freedom and political independence, solidarity with Scotland, and its revival of cultural heritage, while the dressing gown was encoded with similar semiotic connotations of freedom in early nineteenth-century Russian culture. The

scholar's attention is drawn to Kiprensky's portrait, in which Pushkin is depicted wearing an *almaviva* cloak made from a two-sided tartan fabric, and to Tropinin's portrait of the poet in a tie a la Byron and a dressing gown. Kirsanova argues that these details of dress indicate Pushkin's political and aesthetic interests and preferences and are in harmony with the poet's free spirit. In parallel with this major sartorial narrative, this article activates a number of smaller threads, including Pushkin's artistic dialogue with Kiprensky, his friendship with Nashchokin, the afterlife of his portraits and personal belongings such as his much-loved dressing gown (*arkhaluk*) made of a tartan fabric in which the poet was depicted posthumously by Karl Mazer, the technology of production of tartans, to name just a few topics.

Our fourth contributor, Colleen McQuillen, explores the trope of social and literary masquerades and its performative functions in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century satirical works. The scholar shows how authors use this trope to comment on the emerging literary culture. This critical discourse originates at the time when literary culture reinvents itself, moving away from a rigid neoclassical hierarchy of genres at the end of the eighteenth century, with newly introduced genres, which were still seen as 'imposters'. At this time, the novel, vaudeville and melodrama, claimed their status and place on Russian literary Parnassus, with varying degrees of success. Here, the trope of masquerade reflects the destabilizing nature of the literary process, with writers questioning the constitution and boundaries of literature, its circulation and relationships with readership, its feminization and commercialization, as well as the consequent notion of fashionability, which becomes associated with these new processes. Here, the eighteenth-century connection between paper and cloth, in which clothes were used for

making paper and paper offered support to dress, opens up a rich potential for the production of masquerade imagery.

Victoria Thorstensson's article investigates the link between fashion and the radical journalism of the 1860s-1880s, taking as her case study the sartorial history of the nihilist movement and its reception in Russia. In radical circles, blue-tinted glasses and other markers served as ideological statements, as the dressing gown and tartan had in previous generations. The anti-state movement, which advocated the values of positive sciences, utilitarianism, materialism, and socialism, rose to prominence in the 1860s and was associated with the figure of Nikolai Chernyshevsky, the author of *What Is to Be Done?* (1863). The most famous nihilist protagonists in Russian literature – Bazarov and Raskolnikov – were portrayed by Ivan Turgenev in *Fathers and Sons* (1862) and by Feodor Dostoevsky in *Crime and Punishment* (1866). Bringing evidence from memoirs, literature and art, the scholar analyses the complex semiotic dress codes of this counterculture as an expression of identities and ideologies, finding parallels with sartorial statements of European protest movements. She demonstrates that the attributes of the nihilist dress culture were imported from the West, and shows how these deliberate anti-fashion statements, which went against Russian mainstream culture and fashion, were adopted, sometimes superficially and sometimes genuinely by the followers of the movement and turned into political fashion statements. In addition, the scholar investigates the divergences in dress culture between actual nihilists and the 'new men' in Chernyshevsky's novel, which reflect the critic's misconceptions about the role of fashion in the protest movement.

Our issue closes with Ksenia Gusarova's article, which discusses the changes in attitudes towards fashionable products of animal origin in late Imperial Russia in the context of the emerging animal protection discourse, which she links to the establishment of the Russian Society for the Protection of Animals in 1865 and the Female League Against Cruel Fashions in 1899 and their educational activities. In addition, the scholar argues that the European and Russian philosophical and cultural discourse on the agency of animals, as well as the fashion discourse on degeneration, mediated by the theory of evolution, led to the emergence of negative attitudes to these fashionable products. In light of Norbert Elias' theory of civilizing processes, the scholar argues that these public initiatives were a part of the reform process of the 1860s and were one of the subtler mechanisms that the state employed to educate and 'bind' its subjects through acts of local self-government, showing that the initiatives, in fact, supported established social hierarchies. The scholar further shows the impact of this discourse on the works of Dostoevsky and Veresaev that discuss animal suffering and demonstrates their mixed feelings towards animal protection initiatives.

We hope that you will find this issue engaging and thought-provoking. We would like to thank the editors of the journal Jo Turney and Bethan Ball for their encouragement and support in helping us realize this project. Special thanks go to Daniel Green who helped organize a conference at Durham University on the subject of Imperial Russian dress culture. We would like to extend our deep gratitude to our anonymous reviewers whose expertise and generosity of scholarly spirit helped us improve the issue. We are also very grateful to our colleagues Olga Novoseltseva and Zhanna Etsyna at the State Hermitage

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